



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

### ***State and Local Responses to Domestic Terrorism: The Attack on the U.S. Capitol and Beyond*** **March 24, 2021**

I want to send my condolences to the families of the victims in both the Atlanta and Boulder shootings. It is deeply saddening that this country has experienced two mass killings in a week's time. I am thankful for the first responders in both incidents, including Officer Eric Talley, who lost his life responding to the Boulder murders. Although the motive of both shootings is still under investigation, the Committee will continue to monitor developments and will be ready to assist in any way we can.

Today the Subcommittee is meeting to hear from state and local representatives about their efforts to address domestic terrorism in their communities. State and local governments and their first responders are on the frontlines of combatting the growing threat of domestic terror, and I thank them for their work to keep our communities safe.

Domestic terrorism is not new — for over a decade, I have raised the issue in this Committee and urged that Congress work to combat the threat. For years, there have been indicators of violence by domestic actors. Nine years ago, a gunman with ties to white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups entered a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and killed six worshippers. In 2015, a white supremacist extremist killed nine African American parishioners at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston. Tragically, there are many more incidents that I could list— all warning signs for what we saw at the U.S. Capitol on January 6.

Before the domestic terrorism attack on the Capitol, experts were warning that domestic terrorists pose an increasing threat to the public's safety. Over a year ago, FBI Director Wray sat before us and warned that domestic terrorism cases were at an all-time high, with Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists — specifically white supremacist extremists — posing the greatest threat.

In February, the Committee held its first hearing of this Congress on the January 6 attack to examine why the warnings before the Capitol siege were not heeded. The testimony we received painted a daunting picture. The witnesses warned that domestic terrorism threats would persist for the next 10 to 20 years. And last week, we heard from Secretary Mayorkas that domestic terrorism is the “most lethal and persistent” terrorist threat to the United States.

While the motive of the deadly Atlanta shootings is still under investigation — the attack that left 8 people dead appears to have been directed toward Asians. This is a troubling fact, especially at a time where Asian-Americans are reporting concerning levels of targeting and violent incidents, indicating that domestic terrorism is metastasizing. As we work to rein in this source of terror, we must understand state and local perspectives about the threats we face and learn how they are working to counter them.

On January 6, domestic violent extremists came to Washington, DC from all across the country to participate in the insurrection. Those participants went back to their communities, scattered across the

country. As a result, 55 of 56 FBI field offices across the nation are leading investigations related to January 6. Additionally, as the Chairwoman and I touched on earlier, before the January 6 attack, states were working to build resilience and bolster security in their communities following domestic terrorist threats and acts. This threat is nation-wide, and state and local efforts are essential to addressing it.

Today, we will hear from State Attorneys General and a District Attorney about the tools we currently have to combat domestic terrorism, where we are doing well, and where we can improve. I look forward to learning about the work they are doing to see where the Federal government can help complement state and local efforts to protect our communities.

I am encouraged that Federal and local partners are working together to bring charges against the insurrectionists who desecrated the U.S. Capitol, among other heinous crimes aimed at targeted groups of Americans. However, there is clearly more work to be done. One important area is improving data collection and transparency. Access to information is essential to collaborative efforts to understand the magnitude of the domestic terror threat. Therefore, the Administration must prioritize the production of valuable data required by the FY20 NDAA that will highlight the foreign and domestic terrorist threat picture, which is now more than nine months past due.

Chairwoman Slotkin and I, along with leadership from the House Intelligence and Judiciary Committees—including Subcommittee Member Rep. Jackson Lee—sent a letter to President Biden highlighting our shared focus on addressing domestic terror and calling on him to prioritize the production of this report. The information is critical as it will help Congress and the public better discern what steps must be taken to combat domestic terrorism. We must rise to the occasion and work together to address this serious, persistent threat to the homeland.

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